

Institution: Lancaster University		
Unit of Assessment: 21, Sociology		
Title of case study: Reversing the neglect of maternal outcomes beyond child removal: changing the landscape of preventative services in the UK and Australia		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 to 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Karen Broadhurst	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: September 2003 to present [break in service July 2013 to August 2015]
Claire Mason	Research Fellow	September 2015 to present
Bachar Alrouh	Research Fellow	August 2015 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2015 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>A programme of agenda-setting, collaborative research on birth mothers' repeat appearances in care proceedings has catalysed rapid and widespread change in the landscape of preventative services for women who have had children removed from their care through the family courts on account of child protection concerns. By providing the world's first estimate of women's repeat involvement in care proceedings and capturing the severe negative consequences of serial removals of children (typically very young babies), a previously hidden societal issue is now a mainstream policy and practice concern in the UK and Australia. For the first time, rather than face termination of help at the close of family court proceedings, birth mothers in the UK and Australia can access intensive support shaped directly by this research. The associated practice of removal of newborn babies from parents' care, has also been subject to national review in the UK and Australia.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Researchers at Lancaster University have progressed a programme of sustained collaborative research, which has provided the world's first estimates of the scale of women's repeat appearances in family court care proceedings, on account of child protection concerns. The research has also evidenced the severe, negative impact on lives of serial involvement in care proceedings, which heightens mothers' vulnerability to repeat pregnancy and the removal of infants at birth. For the first time, the disproportionate number of young care leavers appearing as parents in repeat care proceedings is also evidenced. Broadhurst first uncovered this grave societal issue in 2011, in research commissioned by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to examine new ways of diverting families from care proceedings [G1]. After a short break in service, Broadhurst re-established a team at Lancaster (2015) and intensified efforts to evidence the full extent of the issue. The team has led and collaborated with national and international academic and practice partners, to raise over GBP3 million in funding, published over 30 outputs (including prize winning/editor's choice articles), extended the research to the removal of babies at birth, and actively supported the development of preventative projects across the UK and in Australia. The impacts claimed in this case derive from the following two strands of work:</p>		
Strand 1: Birth mothers in recurrent care proceedings in England and Wales		
<p>In December 2012, in a keynote speech which opened the Family Justice Council's 6th annual debate, Broadhurst first proposed the motion that women in recurrent care proceedings were being "failed by a system unable to respond to them as vulnerable adults needing support in their own right". An agenda-setting publication followed, making a plea for preventative action, addressing growing disquiet among professionals about the termination of support to women, once children were removed from their care [R1]. In December 2015, and with substantial funding from the Nuffield Foundation, an expanded Lancaster team and clinical co-investigators from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust published the world's first estimate of women's repeat appearances in care proceedings [R2, G2]. Based on a sample of 45,541 women in England, the team reported that 1 in 4 women were at risk of returning to court, following an index appearance. This first, and subsequent estimates [R3, R4] provide</p>		

unequivocal evidence that many cases do involve the same mothers, who lose infants and children repeatedly to public care, and these cases are far from infrequent in England and Wales. The team also evidenced the high proportion of repeat cases that concerned newborn babies (60% of all repeat cases were at birth, 70% were infants, [R2, R3]). From in-depth interviews with birth mothers (72 mothers in 7 local authorities in England) and review of a representative sample of 851 sets of recurrent care proceedings [G2] the team exposed the severe, negative consequences of child removal heightening women's vulnerability to substance misuse, homelessness and acute mental health crises. Although researchers had previously documented complex grief responses associated with child removal, Lancaster's framework [R4] captured the full gamut of 'collateral consequences' making clear the huge recovery challenge for women with fragile and restricted social statuses [R5]. For the first time, the detail of women's own childhoods was also reported; 40% of women had been in care themselves, typically moving between several foster placements and became mothers as teenagers [R3]. The lack of support for these mothers post-removal, was identified as a significant factor in subsequent pregnancies and removals, because women rarely received the help they needed to stop the cycle.

Strand 2: The "Born into Care" series

With further funding from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and as part of a broader programme of work [G3, G4] the team initiated the "Born into Care" series with colleagues at Oxford University and Swansea University [R6, R7]. They probed, specifically, the incidence of care proceedings issued for babies at birth, given the high numbers of cases uncovered in strand 1 of this programme. Although the Children Act 1989 was fully implemented in 1991 to authorise care proceedings, prior to this series, there has been no systematic analysis of care proceedings at birth. Official statistics (US, Australia, Canada and the UK) do not include the category of newborns. Using full-service population data, the team linked infants to their legal order applications, uncovering rising rates of care proceedings concerning newborns in England and Wales, when compared to earlier years. The high proportion of newborn cases issued on an emergency or short-notice basis was also uncovered for the first time, raising searching questions about human rights. Where local authorities make an application to the court on an urgent basis, this can compromise the rights of parent and baby to adequate legal representation, simply on account of insufficient time. The research recommended national review of the practice of infant removals at birth.

3. References to the research

- [R1] Broadhurst, K. & Mason, C. (2013) Maternal outcasts: raising the profile of women who are vulnerable to successive, compulsory removals of their children – a plea for preventative action. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 35 (3): 291-304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09649069.2013.805061>. Peer reviewed.
- [R2] Broadhurst, K., Alrouh, B., Yeend, E., Harwin, J., Shaw, M., Pilling, M., Mason, C., and Kershaw, S. (2015) Connecting Events in Time to Identify a Hidden Population: Birth Mothers and their Children in Recurrent Care Proceedings in England. *British Journal of Social Work*, 45(8): 2241–2260. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcv130>. Peer-reviewed. Winner of Kay McDougall Best Article Prize 2016; "most read", Alternative metric top 5%; covered by BBC News; BBC Today Programme; BBC Wales, 2015 – 2017.
- [R3] Broadhurst, K., et al. (2017) *Vulnerable Birth Mothers and Recurrent Care Proceedings: Main Findings Report*, London: Nuffield Foundation. <https://mk0nuffieldfounpg9ee.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/a7pppykncjiwcpi0vgbi6a2prkgllcc7v.pdf>
- [R4] Alrouh, B., et al. (2020) *Women in recurrent care proceedings in Wales. A first benchmarking report for Wales*, London: Nuffield Family Justice Observatory <https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/app/nuffield/files-module/local/documents/Nuffield%20FJO%20Recurrence%20Wales%20Feb%202020.pdf>
- [R5] Broadhurst, K. & Mason, C. (2020). Child removal as the gateway to further adversity: birth mother accounts of the immediate and enduring collateral consequences of child removal. *Qualitative Social Work*, 19(1): 15-37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325019893412>. Peer reviewed, Almetric score: top 5%.

[R6] Broadhurst et al. (2018). *Born into Care: newborns in care proceedings in England*. London: The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. Held at HEI. Covered by BBC Today Programme, BBC Radio 4.

[R7] Alrouh, B., et al. (2019) *Born into Care: newborns and infants in care proceedings in Wales*. London: The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. Held at HEI. Covered by BBC News Wales; BBC Radio 4.

Peer-reviewed research grants:

[G1] Broadhurst (PI), *The Cafcass pre-proceedings pilot*, Cafcass: (2010-11) GBP10,000.

[G2] Broadhurst (PI), *Vulnerable birth mothers and recurrent care proceedings, a population profiling study*, Nuffield Foundation: (2014-17) GBP511,000. Transferred to Lancaster 1 August 2015; includes two later supplements from 2016.

[G3] Broadhurst (PI), *Family Justice Observatory* (Development project), Nuffield Family Justice Observatory: (2018-19) GBP449,184.

[G4] Broadhurst (PI), *A data platform and analytics partnership for the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory*, Nuffield Family Justice Observatory: (2019-23) GBP2.18 million.

4. Details of the impact

Direct utilisation of this programme of work by national and local policy makers and practitioners in the UK and Australia, has led to rapid and widespread changes in services for birth mothers, turning the tide on decades of neglect of maternal outcomes beyond the removal of children. In addition, the associated issue of removal of newborn babies is no longer a hidden practice, because the Born into Care series has catalysed a major review of this severe form of intervention in family life across the UK and in Australia. Impact is three-fold:

- (a) the repeat removal of children from parents through care proceedings is now a mainstream policy concern in the UK and Australia
- (b) there has been rapid and widespread development of bespoke preventative projects in England and Wales Scotland, Northern Ireland and Australia, with associated reduction in human and economic costs
- (c) the practice of removal of newborn babies at birth has been subject to national review in England, Wales and Australia, leading to policy and practice reform.

The team's research is consistently cited as the leading academic reference in national and international policy and practice documents and has been featured annually by the BBC.

a) Mainstreaming “repeat removals” as a major policy concern in the UK and Australia

Publication of the first and subsequent estimates of the scale of birth mothers' repeat appearances in family court proceedings established “repeat removals” as a major national policy concern in the UK and in Australia. The President of the High Court of Justice and Head of Family Justice [England and Wales, until 2018] wrote: “*prior to Professor Broadhurst's ground-breaking work, our 'knowledge' of what was going on was largely confined to personal experience and professional anecdote... Her research – as I understand it the first in the world on this topic – has provided the first reliable estimate of women's repeat appearances in care proceedings making this a mainstream policy and practice concern*” [S1]. By providing a new international vocabulary and the methods to calculate this pressing societal issue, policy colleagues in Australia began to replicate the work, leading to recognition of the ‘repeat removals’ problem in multiple States and Territories [S2]. The Children's Commissioner for Australia [between 2013 and 2020] stated: “*Broadhurst et al.'s ground-breaking research and subsequent publications of population level estimates of women's vulnerability to repeat appearances in the family court have been instrumental in alerting governments and social work practice communities around the world to the scale and pattern of this problem and prompting our own analyses*” [S3].

To illustrate policy influence in England, the following examples are notable. The Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme allocated major funding to emerging pilots in 2016, including the influential “Pause” practices [S4]. At a regional level, multiple local authorities and public health bodies developed “repeat removal” specific policies, again using the team's work as the leading reference [S5]. By the close of 2016, the influence of the research

extended to supporting legislative change, specific to care leavers. MP Emma Lewell-Buck secured an amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill citing the team's findings regarding the high number of care leavers in recurrent care proceedings, to make the case for better support for this group of young parents [S6: first and second sitting (Lords) 2016].

In Wales, in 2016, the Welsh Government invested in a new pilot project "Reflect", providing for the first time, intensive therapeutic support to birth mothers following the close of care proceedings. In 2017, the Welsh Government announced a major policy shift, in the roll-out of the new Reflect programme across Wales, citing the Lancaster team's statistics [S7a, S7b]. In 2019, Lord Thomas (former Chief Justice for England and Wales) appointed Broadhurst as expert advisor to the Commission on Justice in Wales. The expansion of the "Reflect" programme was firmly endorsed in the Commission's final report, which also directed the expansion of services to tackle parents' repeat appearances in care proceedings [S8]. Developments in Scotland and Northern Ireland have included the release of funds for similar practice developments and analyses of national data [S4].

In Australia, the team's influence contributed to a major national review and subsequent reform of support for parents who have previously been in the care of the State, given new awareness of their vulnerability to recurrent care proceedings [S3]. In New South Wales, Victoria and Southern Australia, the research has also served to directly shape preventative services [S9].

b) Reducing human and economic costs through the development of bespoke preventative services

The development of bespoke preventative solutions has been rapid and widespread. For the first time, rather than face termination of help at the close of family court proceedings, birth mothers and their partners can access intensive, therapeutic support in multiple jurisdictions. 75 out of 152 local authorities in England now offer a bespoke preventative service which provides women with tailored therapeutic support to address the impact of child removal and prevent repeat family court involvement [S10]. A further 10 are in development. In Wales, the Reflect project has reached all 22 local authorities [S7a]. In total, (as far as we have been able to ascertain), 115 new preventative projects are now established UK-wide and in Australia. In collaboration with Research in Practice, Mason has provided direct support to many projects and made resources available to a far wider network, which has greatly aided development and expansion [S10 & S11a,b]. The team's framing of the 'collateral consequences' of child removal, derived from detailed in-depth interviewing with birth mothers, has extended the therapeutic lens to ensure that alongside the trauma and grief of child removal, the debilitating effects of social and legal stigma, loss of welfare and housing entitlements are firmly recognised as major barriers to the recovery of lives [S4].

Regarding the "Pause" project, now operational in 33 local authorities in England, as well as in Northern Ireland, the founder and former CEO wrote: "*Karen's work to provide the world's first ever estimate of the scale of "repeat removals" and subsequent updates greatly aided the expansion of Pause – and other Pause-like projects, not just in England but in Wales, Scotland and in Australia*". She adds: "*...the 'collateral consequences' of child removal (2018, 2019), has informed and endorsed our intensive trauma informed case-work approach, extending our understanding beyond loss and grief, to a fuller appreciation of issues of social stigma, housing and loss of welfare entitlements*" [S4]. A further 10 local authorities in England have received direct support from the Lancaster team, provided in partnership with the research intermediary, Research in Practice, through a 10-week programme supported by a resource manual and short documentary film (over 1,000 downloads), co-produced with birth mothers [S10]. During the pandemic and with funding from Public Health England, Mason established an online community of practice to overcome barriers to continued knowledge exchange between pilots at an earlier stage of development [S10]. From Wales, the Deputy Director of Barnardo's wrote: "*Through this incredibly important research, Barnardo's Cymru and Newport City Council have been able to develop innovative support services... This research has, without doubt, had a significant impact on service development, providing the foundational principles for these teams whilst also directly impacting on Welsh Government policy*" [S7b]. In Pause alone, the number of infants entering

care has been reduced by an average of 14.4 per annum per local authority – equivalent to 215 children over 3 years in 5 of their sites. A recent evaluation estimated benefit to cost ratios associated with these effects to be GBP4.50 per GBP1 spent on Pause over 4 years, and GBP7.61 per GBP1 spent over 18 years [S13].

Direct support to Australian colleagues has inevitably been more remote, however, influence has been considerable. In 2018, Broadhurst delivered a keynote speech to the Australian Government Children’s Services HQ (150 attendees) which was streamed to children’s services professionals in all states and territories across Australia; also, a keynote speech and workshops for Australia’s largest pan-Australia professionals conference (700 attendees). From practitioners’ testimonials it is evident that there has been widespread application of the research to inform bespoke practice developments such as ‘Breathing Space’, but also to shape family inclusive practice in existing voluntary sector organisations such as ‘Life without Barriers’ [S9].

c) Bringing about policy and practice reform on the issue of newborn baby removals in England, Wales and Australia

Impacts associated with the *Born into Care* series have been rapid, prompting national review of the practice of newborn baby removals and reform in England, Wales and Australia. In England and Wales, immediately following publication, the President of the Family Division addressed the annual conference of the Association of Lawyers for Children in November 2018 and called for an urgent review of newborn baby cases, because of “principles of fairness and, frankly, humanity”. The Public Law Group, appointed by the President to review family justice in England and Wales, then incorporated newborns as a core theme, issuing interim recommendations for practice reform in England and Wales to avoid urgent/short-notice applications which compromise legal rights [S12]. In Australia, the Children’s Commissioner stated: “*Based on the Born into Care series – which is focused on the related issue of infant removal at birth, Australian researchers, policy makers and practitioners have been prompted to review the efficacy of policy settings that facilitate infant removal, develop improved data collection and monitoring systems ... and to utilise Broadhurst’s findings to develop more effective parenting support initiatives*” [S3].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] Testimonial from the President of the High Court of Justice and Head of Family Justice in England and Wales until 2018 (2020).

[S2] Testimonial from Senior Policy Officer, Angliacare, Tasmania (2020).

[S3] Testimonial from National Children’s Commissioner Australia (2020).

[S4] Testimonial from CEO, Pause (2020).

[S5] Lewisham Public Health Team Report (2017).

[S6] Children and Social Work Bill [House of Lords] Second sitting, column 57: (2016).

[S7a] BBC Wales: National Wales roll-out of “Reflect” cites the Lancaster’s team statistics; (2018); [S7b] Testimonial from Barnardo’s Wales (2021).

[S8] Commission on Justice in Wales report: paragraph 7.48, p.317 (2019).

[S9] Testimonial from Practice lead, Life without Barriers (2020).

[S10] Statement from Assistant Director, Research in Practice (2021).

[S11a] Centre for Child and Family Justice, dedicated “recurrent care” web-pages <https://www.cfj-lancaster.org.uk/projects/vulnerable-birth-mothers-and-recurrent-care-proceedings>

[S11b] Testimonial from MST and Future Manager, Leeds County Council (2020).

[S12] Public Law Working Group Report: interim recommendations: p.39, para 54 (2019).

[S13] Evaluation of Pause for the Department of Education (by Boddy, Bowyer, Godar, Hale, Kearney, Preston, Wheeler and Wilkinson, 2020).